

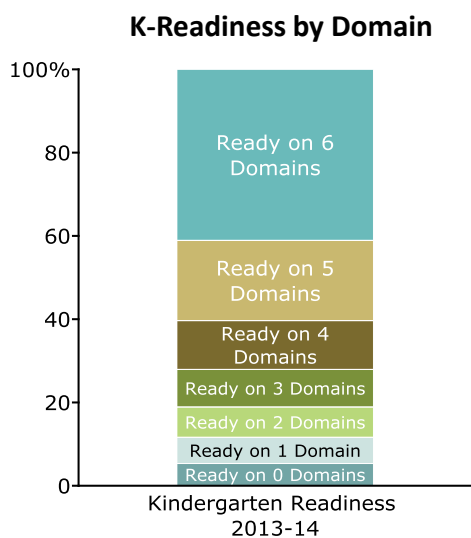
### Early Start Act Executive Summary

In June, 2015 the Early Start Act was approved by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee. The Early Start Act focuses on improving access to high-quality early learning opportunities in Washington as a key path to improving outcomes in young children and promoting strong school readiness rates. Research clearly demonstrates that the quality of early learning environments is critical to supporting child growth and development, and that children need access to high quality programs and stability of participation in these programs (e.g. “dosage”). The Early Start Act responded to this need by providing supports to help existing early learning providers offer a level of quality that will promote strong child outcomes, mandating levels of quality for providers that accept children on child care subsidy or Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) funding, and focusing on improving quality for children most at-risk for not being ready for Kindergarten. The Early Start Act highlights several key goals:

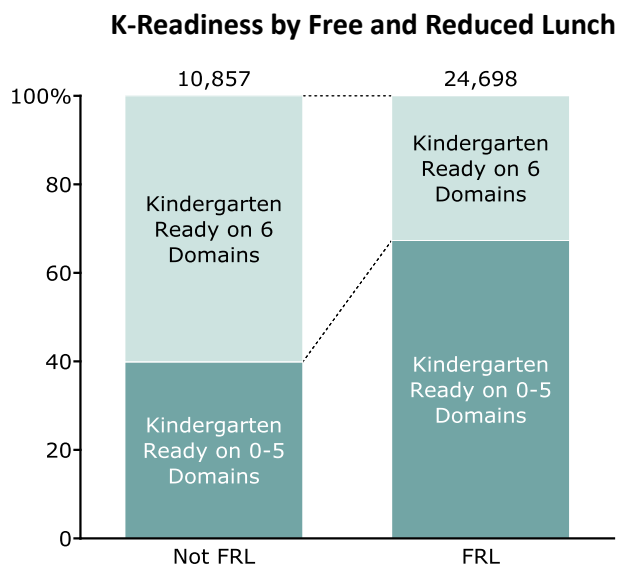
- Create a child-focused system that supports high-quality services that will improve child outcomes and prioritize early learning services to children that need them most,
- Build upon and strengthen the existing system by making sure it is accessible to all children, families and providers in Washington,
- Use data to drive ongoing policy and programmatic decisions and
- Ensure programs are seamless for families, particularly child care and preschool, and working together to promote high-quality, efficiently managed services.

### Washington’s School Readiness Baseline

During the 2013-14 school year, only 41 percent of Washington’s children were ready for Kindergarten on all six domains of development. The data highlights that many children are entering Kindergarten without the skills to be successful in school and low-income children and children of color are less likely to demonstrate Kindergarten readiness.



Source: WaKIDS; 3SI Analysis; 2013-14



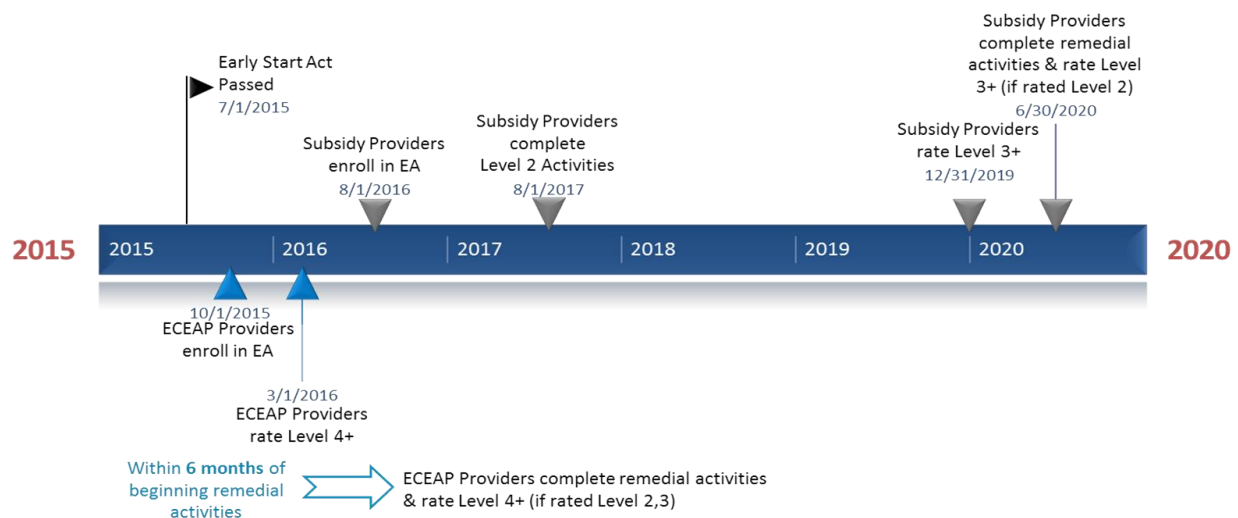
Source: WaKIDS; 3SI Analysis; 2013-14

## How the Early Start Act Will Improve Outcomes

The Early Start Act is focused on improving the quality and scale of early learning programs in Washington in order to improve school readiness rates for children. In order to achieve these goals, the Early Start Act developed key, achievable targets that will increase access to high quality early learning opportunities to the children most likely to benefit:

- All licensed child care providers serving non-school age children on subsidy will rate an Early Achievers Level 3-5 by 2020,
- All existing ECEAP providers will rate an Early Achievers Level 4-5 by March 2016 or begin remedial activities to rate a Level 4 by September 2016,
- ECEAP will be available to all eligible children by the 2020-21 school year,
- Providers at Early Achievers Levels 3-5 will be eligible to receive contracted child care slots,
- ECEAP providers will offer part day, full school day, and extended day models according to demand for services and availability of supply,
- DEL will develop a single set of standards across licensing and ECEAP using Early Achievers as the framework for quality,
- DEL will implement a 12-month authorization for Working Connections Child Care to promote stability and high-quality for low-income children and
- DEL will create assurances that early learning programs are available, supported and appropriate for diverse communities across the state, and that there aren't barriers to participation.

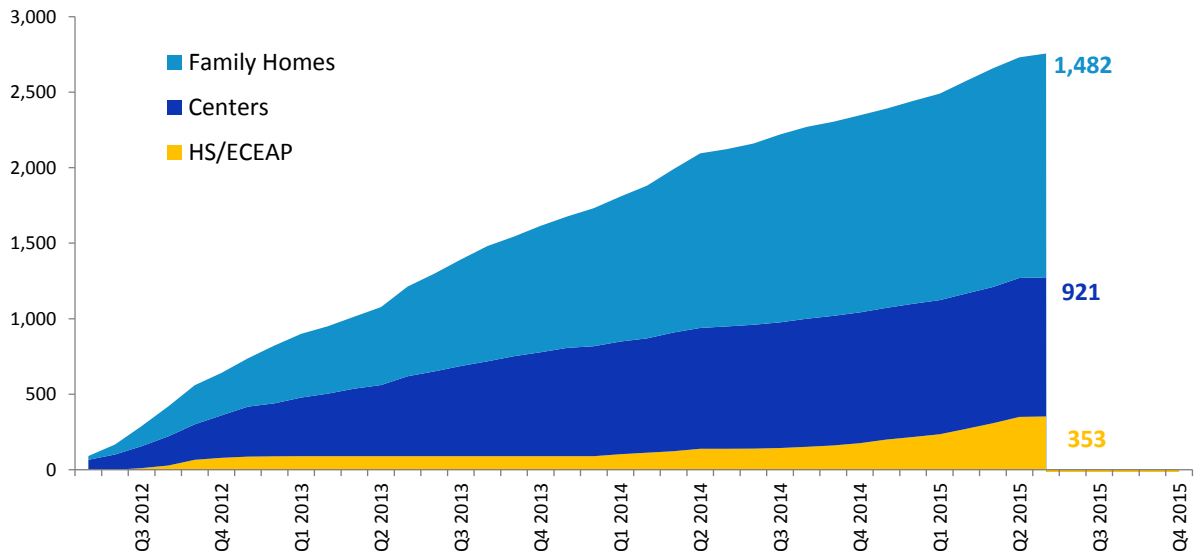
### Early Start Act Timeline for Existing Providers



## Progress to Date

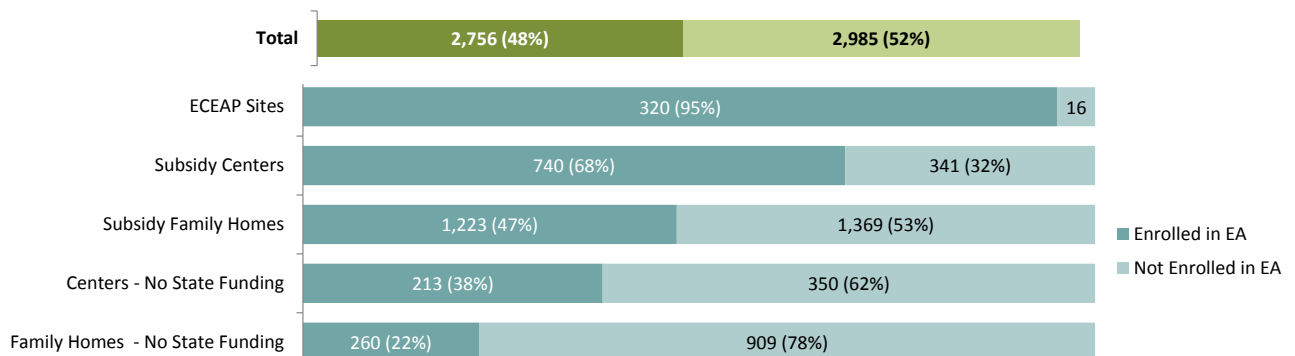
Early Achievers launched on July 1, 2012 with a staggered roll-out to regions across the state. Some regions began implementing Early Achievers on July 1, 2012, while other regions did not begin implementation until July 1, 2013. As of July 31, 2015, there were 2,756 child care centers, family home child care, and Head Start/ECEAP providers participating in Early Achievers. This number represents 45.8 percent of the 5,251 total licensed childcare sites in Washington, and 72 percent of the 490 Head Start and ECEAP sites.

### Early Achievers Participation as of July 31, 2015



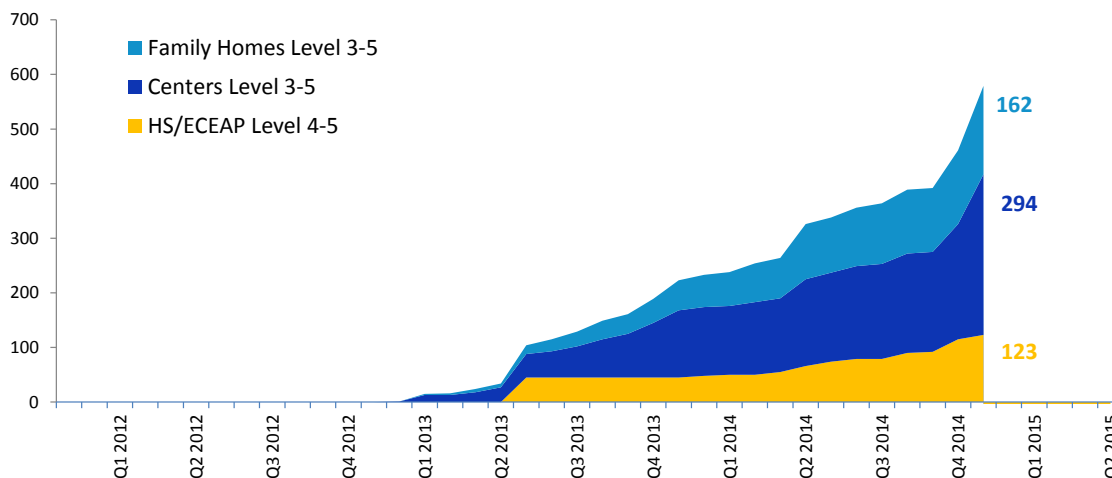
The Early Start Act requires participation in Early Achievers by providers that accept children on subsidy. Currently, Early Achievers participation is higher by both Child Care Centers and Family Home Child Care that have accepted subsidy payments during the 2015 fiscal year, and this trend was visible in every region of the state.

### Early Achievers Participation by Acceptance of Subsidy or ECEAP Funding



The goal of Early Achievers is to support providers to attain a level of high-quality, defined as attaining a rating of a Level 3 or higher. As of July 31, 2015, 345 child care centers, 221 family home child care and 127 ECEAP/Head Start sites have been rated. Of these 693 sites, 579 (84 percent) received a rating of a

**Early Achievers Sites Rated Levels 3-5**



Level 3 or higher. Those that did not will have an opportunity to be re-rated.

Across the state, licensed child care providers (Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes) are going through the rating process and are demonstrating success at attaining a Level 3 or higher. Of the child care providers that have been rated, 80.5 percent have rated a Level 3 or higher. As of July 31, 2015, 345 child care centers and 221 family home child care have completed the ratings process. Just over 85 percent of centers attained a Level 3 or higher rating, while 73.3 percent of family home child care attained a rating of Level 3 or higher.

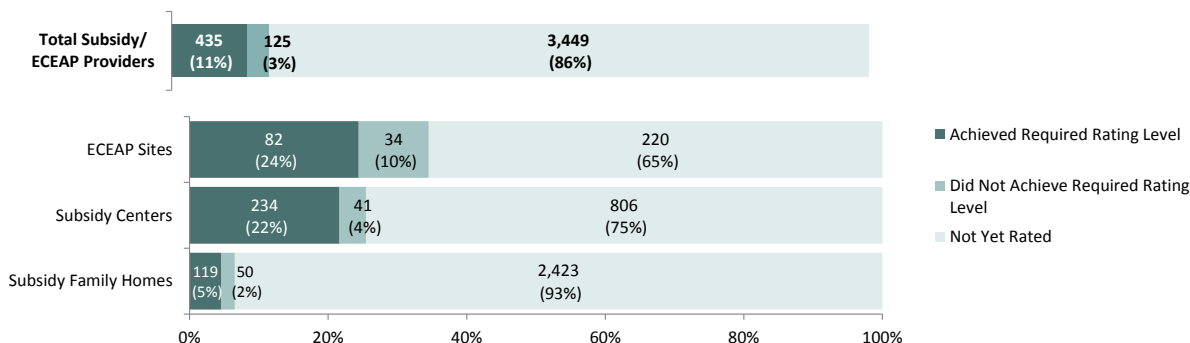
**Children reached:** As of July 31, 2015, there were 76,268 children being served by early learning providers participating in Early Achievers. The majority of these children (65 percent) were being served in licensed child care centers, while 13 percent were in family home

child care, and 22 percent were in ECEAP or Head Start sites. A large proportion of children on state subsidy (76 percent in the last 12 month period) are attending programs participating in Early Achievers. This is higher than Early Achievers participation rates among child care sites accepting subsidy (45 percent Centers, 22 percent family homes) which suggests that sites serving large numbers of subsidy children are more likely to participate in Early Achievers.

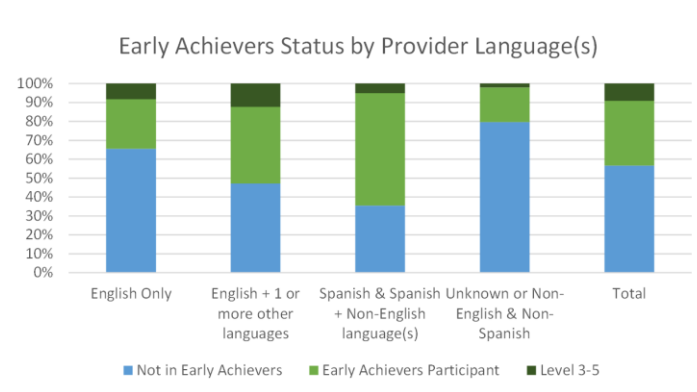
Estimated Total 0-5 Year Olds Reached by Early Achievers Sites	Enrolled in E (LEVELS 2 TO 5)
<b>Total Children Served</b>	<b>76,268</b>
<i>ECEAP</i>	15,370
<i>Family Homes</i>	9,696
<i>Centers</i>	51,202

Currently, more than half (53 percent) of the licensed child care providers that accept children on subsidy are participating in Early Achievers. Of these 18 percent have achieved the required rating level and an additional 36% have completed all Level 2 activities. Forty-six percent of licensed child care providers that will be required to enroll in Early Achievers by August 1, 2016 have not yet done so.

#### Early Learning Providers Required to Meet ESA Timelines



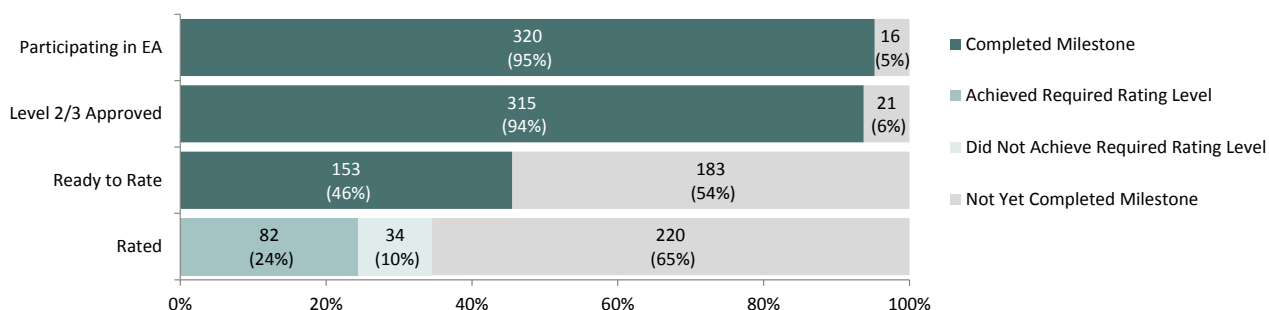
**Diversity of Providers:** Early Achievers participants reflect the language diversity seen at the statewide level. Participation is particularly strong among Spanish speaking providers.



**ECEAP Requirements:** The Early Start Act requires all existing ECEAP providers to be rated at a Level 4 or higher by March 1, 2016.<sup>1</sup> Of the 336 ECEAP contractors providing ECEAP in the 2014-15 school year, 82 had met this requirement as of July 31, 2015. However, 95 percent of ECEAP contractors were participating in Early Achievers by that date and were moving through the process.

<sup>1</sup> New ECEAP providers must enroll in Early Achievers within 30 days of receiving an ECEAP contract and must rate at a Level 4 or higher within 12 months. Licensed Child Care Centers or Family Child Care Homes that receive an ECEAP contract will have 18 months to rate at a Level 4 or higher.

## Pipeline for Meeting ECEAP March 2016 Deadline



Source: Data Analytics Repository (DAR); July 30, 2015

### Key Accomplishments

- Launching and scaling a new *voluntary*<sup>2</sup> initiative that enrolled nearly half of state's licensed child care providers in 36 months. These strong participation rates in a voluntary system demonstrate that providers are willing to enroll and participate in quality improvement work.
- Capacity has built at all levels to provide training; relationship based professional development, and rating data collection. Services have been expanded in multiple languages and resources have been tailored for use in diverse communities.
- Protocols and policies have been updated to reflect ongoing learning and continuous quality improvement.

### Key Challenges

- There is a need for better data. DEL needs the ability to use data to inform decisions and assess the effectiveness of its work. Currently, it lacks both the needed data and the ability to do real-time, in-house analysis of that data.
- Ensuring that children are not left without care because of a lack of providers that have met the requirements. This will require continuing to recruit providers that accept children on subsidy to ensure that capacity to serve these children isn't lost as Early Start Act timelines are reached.
- Making sure that Early Achievers protocols work well for all providers, particularly from diverse communities. Includes ensuring availability of resources in languages other than English and Spanish.

<sup>2</sup> Until the passage of the Early Start Act, participation in Early Achievers was voluntary for licensed child care providers. Legislation passed in 2014 required ECEAP contractors to participate in Early Achievers.

## Next Steps

Washington is charting new territory in the creation of an early learning system tied to improving school readiness rates. To achieve this goal, DEL will:

- Use research and lessons learned about what works for children to develop strategies,
- Implement programs and services focused on providing high quality opportunities to children and families that need them most,
- Evaluate, assess and test the results of its work,
- Modify the plans when necessary to maximize outcomes and
- Partner with others whenever possible to attain broad collective impact.

DEL is currently assessing how we do our work in several areas, with a clear focus on implementing early learning programs that will improve outcomes for children. Specifically, we are focused on ensuring that our work impacts school readiness rates. We are holding ourselves accountable to two primary goals: **improving the Kindergarten readiness rate as measured by WaKIDS to 90 percent of the children we serve, and eliminating race as a predictor of Kindergarten readiness by 2020.**

To achieve these goals DEL is focusing on three primary levers: 1) ensuring programs are effective, 2) coordinating our strategies and approaches, and 3) building an efficient infrastructure to support, measure, and scale our work. Recognizing that Kindergarten readiness begins at birth, DEL will use these levers to ensure that all of our work is promoting strong outcomes for children.